

Dedicated to the memory of
Henry and Mildred Neumeister
of Orrville, Ohio, U. S. A.

WHO LIVED THE HAPPY WAY

and who succeeded in transmitting

its beauty to their daughter

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FOREWORD

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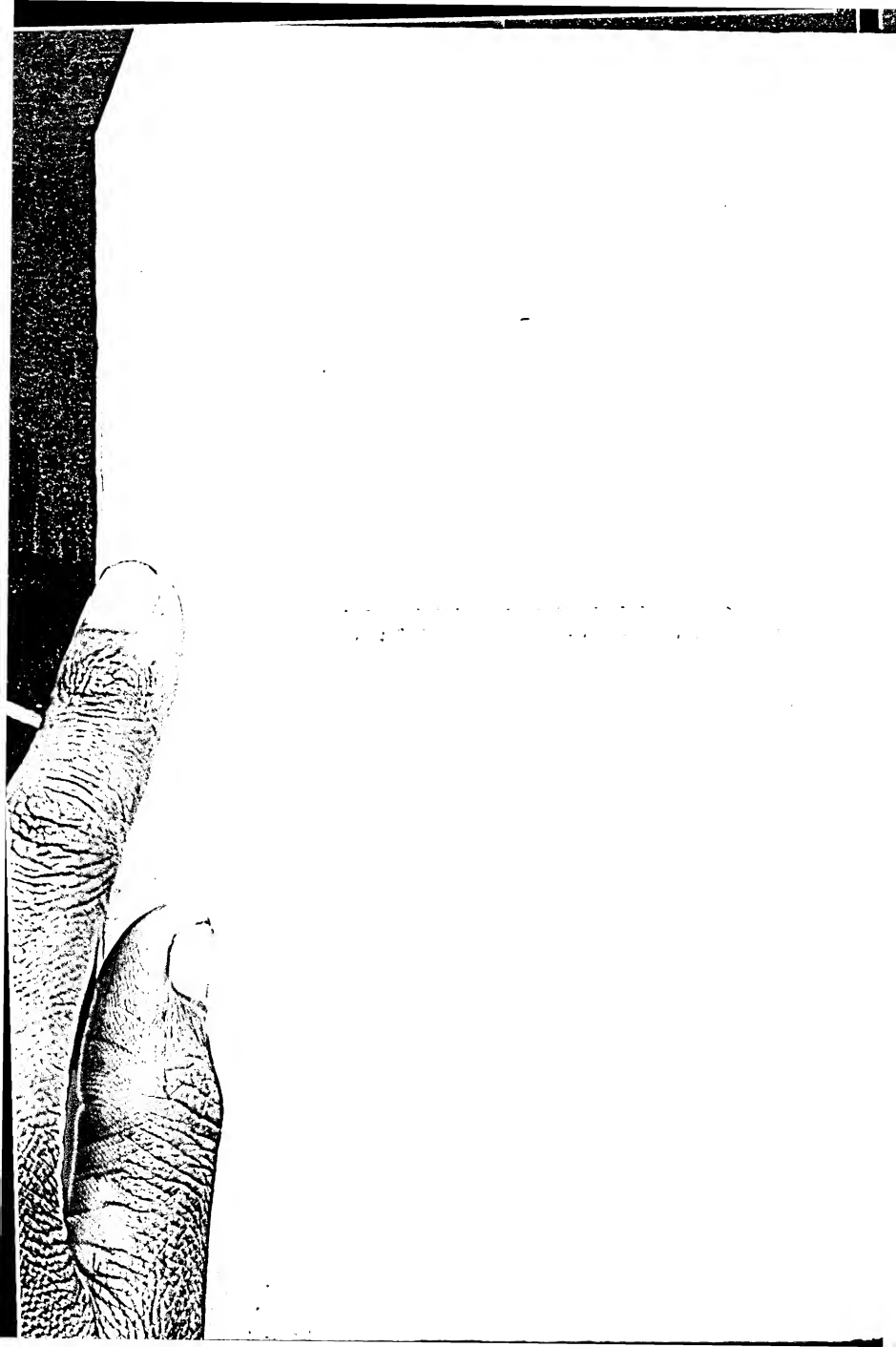
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RRH

OH HAPPY WAY



RELATE TO THE POOR

MOTHER THERESA of India is not just a charitable person who works with the poor: she is as a poor person living with the poor. Even the most conservative of Protestants must admit (and admire) that, at least in this respect, this Roman Catholic "living saint" is following the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus was the richest man who ever walked the face of the earth because "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). Yet He was born in a stable, raised in the home of a carpenter, and (it seems) lived mostly hand-to-mouth during the three years of His ministry. Jesus was a rich man living with the poor as one of them.

When Jesus told the poor that the kingdom of God was theirs (Luke 6:20), He was trying to tell all of us that we can only possess the wealth of the kingdom of God as long as we relate to the poor. This must be a sincere expression of fraternity, a meeting of spirits-not just a pretension or condescension.

Woe to the rich: When we relate to the rich instead of to the poor, it is then that we find ourselves truly destitute. We become like the

foolish rich man who found his life demanded of him on the very night he decided he was rich (Luke 12:16-20). He realized too late that he was richer when he was poorer.

Material possessions have never brought lasting happiness. Possessions bring sorrows and great possessions bring great sorrows. The rich young man of Matthew 19 allowed his riches to keep him from following the Master, and he went away sad.

It is part of our human nature to want to get rich and to get there quickly. We dream of winning the lottery, beating the stock market, marrying a millionaire, inheriting a fortune, and of being discovered for television and films. We are slow to understand that this is the way of sadness and not of joy.

For happiness: If we really want to be happy, we must divorce our minds from the desire of worldly riches. Instead, we must strive to be always good stewards of the things God has already placed in our trust.

The happiest person is the one who has given every-thing he has over to God. That person can happily suffer the loss of all things because he owns nothing for himself.

We should not have anything in our possession which Jesus would not want us to possess. Our hearts must not be so attached to any material possession to the extent that the loss of it would cause us grief. At the same time we must not be careless with the things which God has entrusted to us.

Wealth of the kingdom : The promise of the kingdom of God is given to the poor. The kingdom of God is everything we have always really wanted in life, but which the world was powerless to give.

The kingdom of God is what Jesus offered us when He said that we should not worry about what we shall eat, drink, or wear, but that we should seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, "and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:31, 33).

The kingdom of God is available to every believer in the here and now. As citizens of the kingdom, we have the assurance both our spiritual and physical needs will be supplied. Moreover, we can also enjoy complete peace and security.

The wealth of the kingdom of God is beautifully expressed in the Twenty-third Psalm: "The

Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Our king feeds us, refreshes us, guides us, protects us, indulges us, and enfolds us forever. The kingdom of God is the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price for which those who are truly wise are willing to give up everything on earth.

We who are children of God are rich and very important people. However, in our behavior, style of dress, and standard of living, we can take some pointers from Mother Theresa and Him whom she emulates.



CRY LIKE THE MASTER

DURING the days of Jesus life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. This picture of Jesus from the Hebrew epistle (5:7) is neither familiar nor popular. We are better acquainted with Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted," and Luke 6:21, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

In two instances it is specifically recorded that Jesus wept. The first was at the death of Lazarus (John 11) where "he was deeply moved . . . and troubled." Several weeks later, on the great day of the Triumphal Entry, Jesus wept for Jerusalem because its citizens had rejected God's gift to them and would within forty years reap the terrible consequences of their hard hearts.

There are other times when we know that Jesus was deeply sorrowful. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples that His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the

point of death (Matthew 26:38). Luke adds, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). These known instances are only the "tip of the iceberg;" as it were. It was the very nature of Jesus to experience deep feelings in His fellowship with the Father.

Appropriateness: Jesus never recommended the tears of a spoiled child (or spoiled adult) who has found pouting to be an easy way of getting what he or she wants; nor did Jesus show any approval of tears shed in anger, pride, and selfishness.

Nevertheless there are many times when tears are most appropriate. We should not try to hold back tears when we have lost a loved one or when we see suffering around us. Many other frustrations in life can be soothed by the balm of tears. These include tensions, unhappy events and disappointments. We will weep for our sins when we begin to take our sins seriously.

Most of us have cried for something or other when we wanted it badly enough. The "things" we usually want are physical, material,

and worldly; but the things for which Christ cried were rooted in the spirit. *Our fundamental need is to learn to want the things of the spirit badly enough to cry for them.*

Companion of fasting : Nehemiah is a precious example of sorrowing. When he heard of the deplorable conditions prevailing in Jerusalem, he "sat down and wept," and for some days "mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4).

Fasting is the regular companion of mourning because we cannot be hungry when our souls are truly in travail. Even for the sake of good digestion and the prevention of peptic ulcers, it is best not to eat when the soul is upset.

Our period of fasting and mourning need not always be very long, and Jesus forbade it being done publicly (Matthew 6:16).

Dr. E. Stanley Jones used to say that he never had a blue hour. When a listener challenged him about that remark, he explained that he was often troubled but that it never lasted an hour. It seldom should. It is marvelous what can sometimes happen by delaying a meal for just a half-hour of prayer and fasting.

Arms of Jesus : When Fanny Crosby wrote her hymn. "Safe in the arms of Jesus," she did not intent for it to be a funeral hymn. Get it out, re-read it, and apply it to your daily life. Being safe in the arms of Jesus is for the here and now.

I am willing to admit that my hunger for inner peace could be a throwback to the happy days when I found comfort in my mother's arms. It may be that subconsciously we all seek to regain that long lost bliss and happiness.

We humans seek that primal comfort in many different human ways. Some psychologists say that when people smoke they are reverting back to the days when they sucked milk. Others seek comfort in alcoholic beverages, drugs, sweets, food, sex, and overwork. Some seek peace by getting angry or by running away. Others seek it in luxuries, entertainment, and society. Some "find" it in insanity and suicide. It is certainly not the insignificant item that some suppose it to be.

The human routes to peace are false and leave the pursuer more empty than before. We cannot be truly happy until, through Jesus Christ, we have peace in our innermost being. It was no

accident that Jesus put the obtaining of this inner comfort near the top of His "blesseds."

Happy ending : The world ridicules all of this and tells us that we should never cry but only laugh, laugh, laugh. Be that as it may, in the end the words of Jesus ring true: those who start out laughing end up crying. and those who start out crying end up laughing. The laughter of the followers of Jesus is pure, wholesome, healthy, refreshing, attractive, and infectious. Let's have more of it.

But before we laugh, we must crucify our reluctance to mourn and weep. Tears, fasting, and prayer are the only roads to inner peace and happiness. This is the road that our Savior trod.

If you want to end today (or tomorrow) with laughter, begin it with tears.



UP THE BACK STAIRCASE

ONE of my favorite southern houses has two stairways running side by side separated only by a thin partition. The only purpose for the second stairway, when built, was to separate the masters from the servants. It occurred to me that in every era Jesus would have used the back stairs.

Even good Christians are prone to make jokes about Christ's promise that the meek will inherit the earth. Few believe that it can actually happen in our lifetime.

Jesus is always the finest example of His own teachings. Of Christ' meekness, the apostle Paul declared, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing" (Philippians 2:6,7). The greatest proof of this meekness was His obedience unto death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8).

Consider also the behavior of Jesus in the upper room when "he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a

towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:4,5).

Jesus was the only one who ever had the privilege of choosing His own parents and birthplace. He chose to be born among the poor in the small and insignificant town of Bethlehem. For His home He chose that of a poor family who lived in the despised provincial town of Nazareth. The only time that it is mentioned that Jesus ever rode anywhere (except on a fishing boat) was when He rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey.

To be meek, though, is not to be pusillanimous. Jesus was fearless and was not in any way afraid of those whom He knew were soon to kill Him. Jesus denounced the hypocrites in no uncertain terms. Twice He drove the mercenaries out of the temple area. The result of this meekness was that God exalted Jesus "to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Four thousand years ago there lived a servant by the name of Eliezer who was very faithful to his master Abraham. Eliezer did his work so well that he came to be in charge of everything that Abraham had. Up until the birth of Ishmael and Isaac, Eliezer was in line to inherit Abraham's estate (Genesis 15:2). Eliezer was a foreigner and no relation to Abraham but he served Abraham so humbly and faithfully that he "inherited the earth." He remained a servant but he was really in charge. Almost every neighborhood, home, office, church, and school can boast of at least one Eliezer in their midst. They work so hard and selflessly that everyone relies on them. Even many non-Christians have learned the truth of Christ's teaching that "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mark 10:43,44).

The world's view : The world is diametrically opposed to Christ's call to meekness. The world says, "you must beat down your competition and grab what you can when you

can." Even church leaders become adept at opportunism and dirty politics. Inviolably, the world holds that money both talks and silences. Despite the overwhelming popularity of these ideas, worldly ways of domination do not lead to lasting happiness, as any of the Herods could testify. Only Christ's way of meek and selfless service can lead to the happiness that lasts.

To attain happiness we must crucify our abhorrence of hard, sweaty, dirty manual work. We are not to work only with our brains and only at desks. Hard physical work is always a source of joy and satisfaction. Those who shirk work will always feel the lack of fulfillment. We must crucify our desire to be served and to be above others. We must esteem others to be better than ourselves. We must crucify our insistence on having our rights. We must sacrifice our rights, in love, for the convenience of others.

In order to be happy theologically, we should (to use a phrase of Dr. A. W. Tozer) "be humble about our orthodoxy." We must recognize that there is no group of Christians which is either altogether good or altogether bad. We must listen and learn

from others different from ourselves, and at the same time work for a continual renewal among those of our own affiliation. Humility in orthodoxy is not only necessary between different groups of Christians but also between Christians and non-Christians. That is not to say that we are to condone false teachings or that it does not make any difference what we believe. It does mean that we should commend unbelievers when they are right, rebuke our own members when they are wrong, and continually correct and improve ourselves.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was completely perfect and vastly superior to anyone who ever lived. In my own right, however, I cannot personally claim any superiority over others. It is only by the grace of God that I am a Christian believer and that I possess the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore befitting that we should be humble toward those of other persuasions. The truer we are doctrinally the more humble we ought to be in presenting those doctrines. It is only through meekness that we will be able to reach an understanding with those with whom we disagree.

Peter showed the way when he said, "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander". (1 Peter 3:15,16). Jesus won us by humbly dying on the cross. We will win others by being spent for them. That is the way to inherit the earth.



OH TO BE TRULY HUNGRY!

THE third most terrible thing about American television. is its emphasis on food.

And, the more I eat, the hungrier I get. If I eat heavily on one day, I am hungrier than ever on the next. It goes without saying that it is more painful for a heavy eater to miss a meal than for a light eater.

The same principle also applies to the other hungers of life. When we overindulge in anything, we increase our capacity for that thing. Then it requires more of that thing to meet the increased capacity. The glutton must eat more and more, the alcoholic must drink more and more, the smoker must smoke more and more, and the lustful must lust more and more.


Yet fleshly hungers can never be satisfied by giving one's self over to them. If not stopped, the glutton will eat himself to death, the drunkard will drink himself to death, the smoker will smoke himself to death, and the lustful will lust himself to death.

There are many who try to hold these fleshly appetites in check by the exercise of their willpower, but this in itself becomes a source of frustration. While one part of us is saying "Abstain," the other part is crying out, "Indulge." Falling to temptation then, most victims conclude that their willpower is just not strong enough. The ensuing depression can be as deep as the abyss.

The necessity of killing the fleshly appetites is something that should be obvious not only to the spiritually minded, but also to those who are only worldly wise.

"Weight, Watchers" are troubled with a tendency to eat too much and to snack too often. God wants us to be more indifferent to food. We should not be distressed or angry when meals must be missed or delayed. Through prayer and fasting we should learn what Jesus meant when he said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about" (John 4:32).

Along with everything else, God made marriage, and He made it good. Like food, marriage is intended to be a source of nourishment and well-being; but both food and marriage can rot, stink, and sicken.



It is not wrong to enjoy sex in order to live, but it is wrong to live in order to enjoy sex. God ordained sex to be a means of strengthening the bond of unity between a man and his wife, but its misuse is bound to result in misery and psychosis. It is essential that we keep it in its proper perspective.

There are many other things that are innocent in themselves but which become harmful if we allow ourselves to be obsessed with them. Included in this list may be such reputable pastimes as sports, music, and literature. If being deprived of any of these things makes us nervous, then we have developed too big a hunger for them and that hunger too must be subdued.

The safe hunger : There is only one thing for which we can safely hunger and which will lead to satisfaction in life. That is the hunger for righteousness and the kingdom of God.

Like the other hungers, the more we eat of righteousness, the hungrier we will be for it; and the hungrier we get for it, the more we will need to eat of it. This indulgence, however, leads to life, liberty, and happiness.

Unfortunately this is not the experience of many churchgoers who dutifully set off for church every Sunday. They are not spiritually hungry when they leave home. By the time they get back home, they are really fed up—and they blame it all on the preacher.

If we are not to die from spiritual undernourishment, we must be spiritually hungry at all times. With such a state of spirit, we will always be well fed at church even when the sermon fails. Consequently, we will be hungrier for righteousness after church than we were before. We will be happier too.

At the same time, we must not rely solely on the weekly fellowship of the church for our spiritual food. We must study our Bibles daily and join at least one Bible study group. If there is no Bible study group to join, then we must form one with our friends. Possessing more and more of the kingdom of God and the righteousness of Jesus will become the sole driving force in our lives and everything else will be secondary to that.

Everything else must go! The hunger for fame, popularity, riches, luxuries, security,

privacy, leisure, recreation, entertainment—all of these insatiate hungers must be nailed to the cross.

Am I being to serve? Jesus said it long ago when He declared, "Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).




HOW TO STRIKE A SOFT BARGAIN

TOURISTS leaving for their first trip aboard are faithfully instructed that they must always argue over prices. It is said that the correct price is 75 percent of the "asking price." Armed with this information, the tourist boldly steps into his first foreign shop where he is met by a sign in English which says, "Fixed Price."

The advice about bargaining is neither to be universally accepted nor universally ignored, but I have seen tourists so nasty in their bargaining that they were a disgrace to themselves, to their country, and to their religion. There is a joke told in India about a tourist who haggled very sharply with a merchant and succeeded in buying something very cheaply. As she was leaving, she told the merchant, "I will tell all of my friends where I bought this." "Please don't," the merchant said. The report is highly exaggerated that foreign merchants have a high respect for good hagglers.

My advice to everyone is that we should always strive to drive a soft bargain. A hard



bargain is when we have bought something for 10 percent less than what other people are paying. A soft bargain is when we pay 10 percent more. To pay what everyone else is paying is no bargain at all.

Is it the Christian thing to haggle down to the cheapest price? Is it good for the economy when people do not get a healthy profit from their investments of time, work, and money? We only seem to be opposed to healthy profits when the profit is going to someone else: we are happy enough about healthy profits for ourselves. Wouldn't this be a good place to live the Golden Rule of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us?

Jesus told the rich man to sell *all* he had and to give to the poor. Wouldn't it be something like that if we would a little more gracious and generous in the prices we pay. Americans are good at giving tips of 10 percent and 15 percent in American restaurants and to American Taxi drivers. Why not show some of that generosity when dealing with some of the poorer sections of a foreign

community? Sometimes it seems that the poorer people are, the less generous we want to be with them.

Invitably you will have to hear someone say, "Oh you paid too much!" So what! From a Christian standpoint, it is better to pay too much than too little. It is better to err on the side of kindness. Besides that, the "inflated" price which you paid will probably be close to the correct price. Hagglers tend to ignore inflation, and they have their hearts fixed on last year's prices. It is possible that the extra money you have paid will buy medicine for a sick child who has only the sidewalk for a home.

Some people are so concerned about bargains that they often end up buying nothing at all. They are so afraid that someone will chide them for the price they paid. After they get back to their homes, they begin to regret that they did not buy the item. It becomes the big fish that got away. It is better to pay the higher price and to enjoy your acquisition. When you get it home, it will be worth everything you paid for it.

This advice is intended for more than tourists. Plan for an extra 10 to 15 percent generosity in every sphere of your life. Go ahead and pay people 10 percent more than their work is worth. Don't be so concerned that your local merchant charges 10 percent more than the discount store uptown. There is a time when we should shop around for the cheaper prices, but don't let it rob you of your loving spirit.

You think that you cannot afford it during such hard times. You think that I am giving you extravagant advice unworthy of a missionary. You will agree, though, that God would have us to be more interested in values than in bargains. When we are generous with people, they are generous with us. In the end, in marvelous ways, we get more value for our money.

Our generosity must go further than just in money matters. We should give an extra 10 percent in forgiving others, an extra 10 percent in overlooking their faults, and 10 percent more attention in understanding their problems. We should do 10 percent more

work than what we are being paid for. We should do 10 percent more work in the church than what is expected of us.

There are times when I argue over prices, and there are also times when I give someone more than what he has asked. So what is the result? The merchants rejoice to see me coming, and the barbers fight over me. Is that so bad? I also think that I have given them a loving impression of Christianity. If it has been expensive, I really haven't noticed.



FOR A BETTER LOOK AT GOD

JESUS promised that our perception of God would become clearer as our hearts became purer (Matthew 5:8). We do not have to wait until we die to see God; we can see Him now if we purify our hearts. We will come to know God personally and there will be no doubt as to what He is really like. As it is, even a few impurities impair our spiritual vision. Impurities affect us like frosted glass or scratched eyeglasses. It is like trying to drive a car at night in the rain without a windsheild wiper.

We ought to be more concerned for the purity of our hearts. When someone comes to us with a dirty word, a dirty story, or a dirty picture, we should repel from it in horror lest any of its dirt should fall on us. We should have a deep abhorrence of any filth that might drop on us from books, magazines, films, and television because reading a single filthy story or watching a single filthy film listening to a single filthy conversation can throw dirt onto our souls that will take a whole lifetime to remove.

The impure heart : Jesus described the impure heart very perceptively after one of His arguments with the pharisees: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean" (Matthew 15:19). In the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus taught that sin begins in the heart. "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Besides fleshly lusts there are many other kinds of uncleanness in our hearts such as idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, factions, envy, drunkenness, and orgies (Galatians 5:19-21).

Road to purity: Jesus told His disciples that they were clean because of the word He had spoken to them (John 15:3). The apostle Paul also tells us that Christ cleanses the church "by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:26). Baptism, being "the pledge of a good conscience toward God," is certainly included in the cleansing process, but it takes constant attention to the teachings of Christ over a period of years to result in a pure heart. The washing away of our sins is not

the same as obtaining a pure heart, although we wish it were.

Like the disciples we must not stop with baptism but we must continue to walk with our Lord Jesus and cling to His words. Then as we obey that Word in our daily lives our hearts will become cleaner and cleaner (1 Peter 1:22). Because we are so easily swayed by corrupting influences, we must heed the advice of Solomon who said, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). King Solomon gave us another bit of practical advice that will help keep filth from settling in our hearts: "Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you" (Proverbs 4:25).

Purified by fire: We may work for purity with much fear and trembling but the Bible also tells us that we are made perfect through suffering. Suffering is inevitable for everyone. But whereas suffering hardens the hearts of unbelievers (like Pharaoh), it purifies those whose hearts are rooted in the will of God. "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude,

because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1,2).

When we children go astray, our loving Father in Heaven corrects us by different ways and means. It is not that He is punishing us for being bad, but He is constantly working with us like a potter works with clay, removing impurities and forming us into a vessel fit for His service (Hebrews 12:10, 11). After all, this was the path traveled by Christ himself. "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom every thing exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." (Hebrews 2:10).

Filled to overflowing: It is not enough that the heart should be cleansed of all filthiness. The heart must be filled with the good things of life such as the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It should also be filled with the virtues mentioned in Philippians 4:8—truth,

nobility, rightness, purity, loveliness, etc. Then the day will break, the darkness will disappear, and we will shout with joy, "Now I see God!"

"Create in me a pure heart, O God. and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).



HOLY SANDWICH

WHEN we are confronted with a fight we are likely to react in one of four ways. Certain people will stop and watch the excitement thinking, "The more blood the better!" Some will take sides and join the fight. I am more likely to leave the scene of the conflict and allow the parties to fight it out among themselves. After all, "It is none of my business."

Jesus recommends the fourth type of person who will get in between the combatants, separate them, and then, loving all who are involved and without taking sides with anyone, will try to resolve the dispute. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God," Jesus said (Matthew 5:9). Jesus himself was the great peacemaker whose ministry was, and still is, a ministry of bringing peace between man and God, and between man and man.

Deep meaning: There is a deeper meaning to peacemaking than just settling quarrels. The word "peace" has a deeper meaning for those who are spiritually minded. In God's mind, "peace" encompasses salvation and the complete

inner comfort that only God can give us through Jesus Christ. God's peace is the very atmosphere of the kingdom of God. Only when we breathe this peace of God can we exclaim with confidence, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be found wanting in anything either physically or spiritually."

Jesus used the word "peace" when He greeted His disciples, as in John 20:19, 21, 26. He also said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). Jesus also instructed His disciples, "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house'" (Luke 10:5).

It would not be wrong for Christian believers today to greet each other with the beautiful and meaningful word, "peace." Some believers are afraid to use the word "peace" because there are radicals who misuse it for political purposes. We should not, however, allow these usurpers to deprive us of our birthright to possess this significant word.

Program of peace: God's program of peace does not exclude social causes. God's peace aims for nothing less than complete-

ness and wholeness for man's total needs. When Christians go forth to establish schools, hospitals, orphanages, and food programs, it all comes under the umbrella of God's program of spreading the wholeness which is His peace.

At the same time there cannot be any near approach to God's peace without Jesus Christ, even as there cannot be any kingdom of God without its King. The complete peace between man and God and between man and man is not possible until we have left our sins at the cross of Christ. It is therefore essential for the spreading of God's peace in the world that we preach Jesus and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). The apostle Peter referred to this as "telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

A job for all: The ministry of being a peacemaker is not a special gift given only to a few believers: it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit which is to be possessed and developed by all believers in Christ. The sixth Beatitude emphasizes that we cannot expect to be happy if we neglect the ministry of peacemaking.

Every disciple of Jesus is appointed to be a peacemaker. We do not appoint ourselves

but God has already appointed us. When we see a dispute that needs to be mediated, we do not need to wait for an invitation to mediate because God has already ordained us to the task.

Likewise, when we see any situation where we can help anyone anywhere to become a more complete person, God has already delegated us to handle it. It is always our concern to spread wholesomeness. It must be a source of grief to our Lord that His servants have failed so miserably in understanding the mission of peace which He has given them.

The reward: The reward is a good one. We shall be called "sons of God" or, if you prefer, "children of God." We may already be well known as good speakers, good writers, or good workers, but it is only when we have gained a reputation for spreading peace that people are likely to say, "There goes a true child of God," Our happiness also depends on it because until we have grasped God's principle of making peace and until we have crucified our reluctance to get involved, we can never be the kind of people God wants us to be. Peace be unto you!

RELIGION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

PEOPLE sometimes speak of the Hindi language as being the Hindu language, and they are right. Hindi words are very closely tied to Hinduism, and this causes problems for Christians and Bible translators. Yet this is not a new problem. It was a problem faced by the apostle Paul as he sought to express the Christian message in the idiom of the Greek religion. The English language is the most Christian language in the world because it alone was originated by Christians. Hebrew is also very close to the heart of God.

In the mind of God, there is a distinction between religion and righteousness which is very difficult for people to understand until they have been spiritually enlightened. Truly, in order to understand the difference, we must get behind the words and into the thoughts of God. Still, it is more easily understood in English than in any other language of the world.

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the King James Bible, the words "religion" and "religious" do not appear anywhere in the Old Testament, and only seven times in the New Testament; whereas the different words connected with "righteousness" appear 410 times in the Old Testament and 141 times in the New, not counting the times that the word "unrighteousness" appears. That in itself should give you some insight into the mind of God. Of the seven times that the word "religion" appears, only one comes near recommending it. James 1:27 says, "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." The emphasis is on compassion and purity.

To put it bluntly, Jesus was not religious in the way that the world regards religion. Jesus had no desire to promote religion or to establish a new religion. He was pure, and He preached righteousness. "Seek first His (God's) kingdom and His righteousness," He pleaded (Matthew 6:33).

It is clear from the word "righteousness" itself that it embraces all that is right and up-

right, while "unrighteousness" embraces all that is wrong. That is the true beauty of the English word. Everything that is in the will of God is right and righteousness, while everything not in the will of God is wrong and unrighteous.

However, there is a small complication. There is such a thing as self-righteousness. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). There is also the righteousness of "the scribes and Pharisees," which was a legalistic righteousness. The religious people of Jesus's day were the Scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees. That doesn't mean that they were altogether bad, nor that religious people today are necessarily bad. For the most part, though, they were more concerned for their denominational doctrines, rituals, and traditions than they were for the will of God. Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed theirs, and the apostle Paul also had much to say on the subject.

We find in some countries (such as North Ireland, Lebanon, Iran and India) that some people are willing to commit murder in the name of religion—to say nothing of lesser crimes. Yes, there are some members of the (so-called)

Christian community who are willing to commit murder for their particular views although they never give any thought to the purity and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their religion is wedded to their pride and politics and is a work of the flesh.

Karl Marx said that religion is an opiate. If Karl Marx could have had his eyes opened to righteousness, the world would be a lot better today. Unfortunately, "good Christian people" blinded him by their religiosity. The religious is universally held to be a separate department from the secular; but righteousness can never be considered as a separate department. We do not believe in a state religion, and we contend for the separation of church and state; but we are strongly in favor of righteousness in politics, in government, and in every phase of our national and international life.

In the sixth of his Letters to Malcolm, the much-lamented C.S. Lewis warned us not to think of religion as being altogether bad. I will agree with him to this extent: anything found in religion which is righteous is very good and anything found in religion which is unrighteous is very bad.

There is a lot of opposition in India against converting people from one religion to another, especially when politics are involved. Many people of India also smile at the thought of Americans coming to India to preach religion, when Hindus are more religious than Americans. On the other hand, there are few who object to the preaching of righteousness even when it is emphasized that Jesus is the way to that righteousness. Of course there will always be those who oppose righteousness even as they opposed Jesus Christ himself.

The baptism of Jesus is one of the clearest examples of the separation of religion and righteousness. When John the baptizer sought to stop Him, Jesus said, "For in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Jesus was baptized to fulfill the will of God, not as a compliance to any rule or regulation. When people today are baptized just because it is a rule of their denomination, they are being baptized to fulfill religion, not righteousness.

Every one who practices righteousness is born of God (1 John 2:29). Any one who does not practice righteousness is not of God (1 John 3:10). I don't know of any Bible verses that would urge you to be religious.

THE JOY OF PERSECUTION

IN the last (but not least) of His eight "Beatitudes," Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). Still, it is very difficult to write anything about the joys of persecution. There is the feeling that we "have not yet resisted to blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4). It would be better to leave the writing about persecution to those who have experienced it.

Is it possible that we read too much into the word "persecution"? Are only those persecuted who are thrown into jail, poisoned, burned at the stake, or beheaded? If so, then the eighth Beatitude does not have much practical meaning for most of us, except in anticipation.

The fact of the matter is that to be persecuted to be pursued, harried, or harassed. This is something that a man and his wife can do to each other at the breakfast table; a preacher can do it to his congregation; and a boy can do it to his dad.

We can be badgered for many reasons, good or bad, but it is only harassment "for righteousness' sake" that will bring us blessings from Heaven.-It is not enough that we should suffer just because we call ourselves Christians; it is what we are actually doing as Christians that makes the difference. If we are being picked at because of something wrong we have done, or because of something that we have left undone, or because of some wrong attitude, then we had better delay our rejoicing until after we have made amends.

As we think about it, though, we realize that some people oppose us because of the right things we do, like making the children come home at a decent hour and forbidding the watching of indecent programs on television. Both Christians and non - Christians can be oppressed for saying and doing right things. But whoever loves righteousness is irresistibly drawn to Jesus because "he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they are done in God" (John 3:21).

We are usually willing to forego the joy of persecution because we do not like to run

the gauntlet of unpopularity. We long ago dedicated ourselves to preserving peace at any price. we don't want to be accused of rocking the boat or of upsetting the apple cart. We go with the crowd, compromise our convictions, and lose God's blessings. We could also lose God's Heaven because Revelation 21:8 tells us that cowards will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death.

It is most usually understood that the first seven Beatitudes are intended to be part and parcel of our daily lives; but we think of persecution as being a rare occurrence experienced by a few unfortunate saints in heathen lands. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If persecution is not a common experience with us then it is because we are deliberately avoiding it. We do not have to wait until the arrival of the Communists or of 666. The opportunity to enjoy persecution is here and now as we react to the evils surrounding us. Only as we experience persecution can we be filled with the full joy of Jesus.

Like other types of suffering, persecution cleanses us of dross, purifies us and makes us

genuine vessels of gold fit for the Master's use. "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed, and do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Peter 3:13-15).



FORGIVENESS

THE words which Shakespeare put into the mouth of King Lear, "More sinned against than sinning," express the feeling of most of humanity. Sinners though we be we don't feel that we deserve all the bad treatment we get from others.

Would you like to have it the other way around? Would you rather be more sinning than sinned against? Or do you think that our sinning and our being sinned against should be equal?

Seeds are sown with the expectation that they will bring forth a good crop: hopefully a hundred-fold, but at least thirty-fold. If a farmer reaps only as much as he sows, he is going to starve to death. Is it reasonable to expect them that when we sow the seeds of sin that we are only going to reap as much as we sow? Could King Lear reasonably think that after 80 years of sowing seeds of sin among his 100 knights and squires, his dukes and his three daughters, that he was not going to reap a good crop? As the corpses pile up on Shakespeare's stage, we see that King Lear reaped a good harvest although he didn't enjoy it very much.

The situation is not hopeless and there is something that we can do about it. There are other seeds which we can sow that will help offset the harvest of sin which is due to each one of us. If we sow seeds of love, kindness, forgiveness, understanding, mercy and peace, we will find that these seeds also bear richly and it won't be long before we are more blessed than blessing. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7). Also, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:37,38).

Jesus also warns us that if we expect to receive God's forgiveness, we must sow the seeds of forgiveness: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:14,15). The amount of forgiveness which we reap will be directly proportional to the forgiveness which we sow.

Going back to Shakespeare's play Portia pled eloquently with Shylock to forgive the

Merchant of Venice. "The quality of mercy is not straining," she said. "It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed; It blesseth him that gives and him that takes: Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown Mercy is an attribute to God himself, and earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice." But Shylock demanded justice, got more than he bargained for and lost everything. When we fail to show mercy, we are committing the sin of Shylock all over again.

When we forgive others, God forgives us but there are many other by-products of a forgiving spirit. A forgiving spirit is also a great help in the maintenance of good physical and mental health, and it makes people love us. In the end we will still be more sinned against than sinning, (I hope so anyway), but we will not be able to see the weeds for the glorious beauty of God's golden harvest of love.

